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EDU 402 Philosophy Statement

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When I think about whom I am I think about why I choose to make each of my decisions. I make decisions based on how they will affect me and those around me. I remember being told once that I should put myself first in order to be happy. What I discovered for me was that helping others made me happy. I think education is a wonderful field filled with so many opportunities to make a difference in someone's life. Some students will spend more time with their teachers at school than with their parents or guardians at home. As a high school social studies teacher I hope to take advantage of every opportunity given to me to make a difference.

My own education influenced my philosophy of education. I look back at high school without complete satisfaction. Who I am as a student in college is completely the opposite of who I was as a student in high school. I was not interested in high school, and since I did not take charge of my own education I missed out on a lot. I was never interested or challenged back then. I did not think anything applied to me, and I did not want to study things that had no meaning to me. I had teachers who cared, but I also had teachers who just went through the motions. I was lost in high school, and I do not want any of my students to be lost. I will make sure that I get to know them and create my lessons to keep their interest. I want my students to not only have a place in my classroom but to also create the classroom. They are the ones that are there learning, and I want to give them an education experience that I did not have when I was younger. What I believe is important as an educator will ensure that students do not have the same high school experience that I had. Together, the students and I will make the learning meaningful and engaging.

One thing we learned immediately as education majors was to be constantly observing. This is something I had done even in high school, but knowing more about educational techniques I felt more

qualified in choosing what worked and what did not. So within one day I immediately began observing and reflecting on teaching styles in my college classes. A bad lesson or activity is the chance for improvement. I have learned from observation what I am excited about including in my classroom and what does not seem to be effective. From my observations I have learned above all that passion for the subject makes a huge difference. The classes I have loved the most have been taught by educators who truly love the subjects that they teach. Their excitement, humor, and true knowledge is so powerful. Even if there is a boring slideshow the educator can drag you into it. Those are classes that I would never get tired of and that I would never miss or be late for.

Reflection is an important part of all education classes. In most of them we are required to have a reflection blog. Reflection is great for so many reasons, and it is so important in the classroom. I will always be reflecting as an educator about how I can make my lessons more engaging and effective. It also makes me think about how my professors have used reflection for me as a student. Making sure that students are also reflecting throughout their learning is just as important. It is useful for them as students and for me as an educator. This way they can tell me what teaching techniques work the best for them and what they enjoy doing. It is also another chance to get to know my students better. Reflection is also important throughout the school year because it can pick up students who are beginning to fall behind instead of finding out at the end of the year that the student missed something early on.

In my classroom I want a lot of my readings to come from places other than textbooks such as primary sources, articles, journals, etc. At the University of Maine at Farmington most of my classes have used books that are not textbooks. Textbooks seem to provide a lot of information, but I believe they are structured to memorize rather than apply information. Reading other forms to learn about social studies is very important because it gives students the chance to make connections. Also books such as micro-histories allow students to learn about people in history as well as interpret important pieces of society that may normally seem hidden in the writing. This also allows students to read about things they are interested in. Social studies covers massive amounts of subject information and allows for learning

everything. Bringing these different readings in instead of simply using the textbooks creates student interest because they have choice.

At the University of Maine at Farmington I have learned a lot about special education. This is really important to me because my brother has autism. I think when something directly affects a person they are more likely to take interest in it, and that is how I feel about special education. The more I learn about it the more it becomes a part of my educational philosophy. I love to learn about the topic because there is so much to learn and so many ways to help everyone in the classroom. What I want is to help develop great educations for all of my students, and I mean all of my students. This means finding ways to challenge individuals with disabilities in ways that they might not normally be challenged. It means implementing IEPs properly and making sure each individual has access to all the resources and assistive technology that they need. I also read articles or hear people talk about individuals with disabilities and person-first language is often left out. This shows how immediate and important the need for a change in education for individuals with disabilities is. I hope to make a difference there as much as I can.

A topic in education that I am really excited about is alternative schools. I really love the idea of nontraditional schools including schools within schools, or perhaps I just love the idea of students being challenged and excited during school. Obviously there are numbers of choices for students when it comes to alternative or nontraditional schools because one option does not work for everyone, but taking the opportunity to pull together students' interests and the community is amazing. When the students can own their own work then it becomes real and incredible learning. That is work to be proud of. The hands-on or project based learning probably is not for everyone, but I think it is a great way to expand and deepen the knowledge. Some schools may even have meetings where the whole school is on the same page in terms of learning goals for the day. Students want to and need to know the point of why they are learning. Whether the student hates school and thinks it has no purpose or the student wants to focus completely on the goals, making this clear to students can put them on the right track for being successful and engaged.

I also believe that the close community that these types of schools can offer creates an environment where students feel safe and engaged where bullying is less of an issue.

Another topic in education that is important to me is Discipline with Dignity. Discipline with Dignity is important to me, and something I will implement in my classroom, because it focuses on positive behaviors while respecting the students. Using these techniques in the classroom will lead to lasting long-term behavioral changes that are necessary to handle immediately. Within the structure, Discipline with Dignity allows students to be a part of setting rules in the classroom which in turn help the students to understand how to reach the goals of classroom behaviors. Bringing them into the process also makes them feel respected and a part of the classroom which also focuses on the positive relationships that are necessary in classrooms. Making students attend detention or sending them to the office does not help them at all. Instead it seems to make things worse. A student learns nothing about the behavior that needs to be changed. Instead of students punishing students, Discipline with Dignity helps to teach them what to do and how to act in and out of the classroom including interactions with their classmates.

A very popular topic that I am not sure about is Mass Customized Learning. Just like most things, there are positives and negatives about this approach. The idea of standard based learning that is individualized is an amazing concept that I think we should strive for. Since MCL looks different to everyone, I am sure I would be able to tweak it so that it fits my personality while still serving the students. With the focus taken off of grades, students can focus on what they are learning rather than the grade they want. I like the idea of implementing pieces of MCL in the classroom to start, but one thing I am not sure about is the reliance on technology in the classroom. Technology definitely is not my favorite thing, but I know that's where the world is moving. People have been concerned about losing social interactions and increased bullying due to the use of technology. Although students can interact with technology, they will be losing those personal face-to-face interactions that are important in life, especially when it comes to finding and having a career. Another worry that I have is the lack of

resources. Without access to resources for everyone MCL would not be very successful. One resource a school might be low on is educators. It seems to be truly effective that there would need to be more than one teacher in medium to large classrooms. If budget cuts are leading to teachers losing jobs, how could they bring in even more teachers to fill the need for MCL? Trying to stay positive, I think this will work well for some students. I think there will also be a lot of students left behind because of this. The diversity of learning and applying information that MCL offers is important in a classroom, but it will take more time. Right now most teachers already do not have enough time. I think the best way to do this is to start with pieces and work from there. This is where education is going so starting it now is crucial. It will be new to many teachers and students. Implementing it all at once might be very difficult for the entire school, and I would be concerned about losing some students and risking their successes in their educational tracks.

From studying philosophies in my education class I discovered that if anything I am my own unique philosophy. There were pieces of both teacher-centered and student-centered philosophies that represented my teaching philosophy, but I focused on pieces of different ones that would help me be an effective teacher and ensure success for my students. I chose pragmatism for my main philosophy. I believe that student based learning is very important, and questions and rethinking things are very important in and outside of the classroom. This means there will be many projects in my classroom and plenty of time for exploration. Through the exploration and projects students will be able to see how the world works as well rather than just a focus in the classroom. I also liked pieces of realism and pieces of idealism, but I believe that neither of them on their own is enough. I agree with idealism in the way that the teacher and student needs to motivate themselves to gain perspective, but I also believe in questioning, clarification, experimentation, observation, and classification. My students' educations and lives are most important to me, and my philosophies will reflect what I can do to make their time in my classroom productive.

I respect aspects of all educational theories, but I connected most with the student-centered theories. I love Reconstructionism because of the connection to society. One thing I would love to bring into my classroom is service learning. I want my students to have a chance to connect with and be a part of the community. Unless students do volunteer work or are involved in sports they might not have any connection to their communities. Social problems are also focused on within this theory. This is important in a social studies classroom because of current events. There are students who may not have access to the news or what is going on around them, and the classroom provides an excellent opportunity to expose them to it. The other educational theory that I connected to was progressivism. Experimentation is really important to me. I think it provides an environment for richer learning that includes the interests of the students. Progressivism can include team-teaching which is very powerful. Along with that collaboration this educational theory encourages the combination of content areas. Two content areas that I would love to combine someday in a classroom would be science and history. Science was the most difficult subject for me in high school, and I have found that in college I understand it much better when it is combined with history.

I seemed to fit in more with earlier philosophers such as Confucius and Socrates. Confucius's idea of setting up a universal ethical system where students can learn everything they need to know while developing their own moral views made a lot of sense to me. That is everything that I wanted in my classroom when I first wanted to be an educator. I think this creates strong educated people which in turn creates a strong and educated society. It also means that students are informed, involved, and ready for decision making. Socrates was similar in the way that students would become morally excellent. I want them developing their own moral thinking while I present them with cases and events. They would be able to question what we were doing and come up with their own ideas instead of being told how to think. Mann's philosophy added a little more to the two philosophers that I connected with the most. He included physical and artistic education which I both believe are very important in education. Arts and other programs are cut because of funding, and these are classes that open up students' creativity and

interest in school. Very different than the others I really appreciated part of Gallaudet's philosophy of education. I did not love it in its entirety, but the realization of how important special education is made me excited. Even the writing of his philosophy showed the importance of creating awareness for person-first language. Individuals with disabilities deserve and have the right to equal education. They deserve to be challenged and have equal opportunities.

One of the things that makes me happiest is organization. I appreciate things being orderly and get excited about different colored pens, sticky notes, place markers, and calendars. Because of my need for organization, I expect my classroom to be very organized and colorful. I would like to think that for this reason my class would also run very smoothly, but I also expect organized chaos. I hope that the organization along with the organized chaos will help learners who need focus as well as students who do not like to follow a set list of assignments. I plan to be prepared every day for things to change. I like to be prepared so I expect that the resources students need will almost always be readily available.

A goal of mine is to constantly be working on lesson plans. I will be constantly adding to them and revisiting them. I like to plan ahead and be ready for things. During my practicum experience teaching at the local high school I planned my lesson so that every physical activity and activity center could be simulated on the computer. I knew I had students who would shut down if they were not using their computers so I designed my lesson in a way that, if needed, could be done on the computer while the student achieved the same learning and still had the chance to apply their learning. I do not think there is a way to always be prepared like that for every situation because students will constantly be surprising me. My goal though is to be as prepared as I can, and I will try to do that through my lesson planning.

Drive and motivation are most useful and meaningful when the students motivate themselves. Students are motivated when the topic or project is something that they are interested in, they care about, or has meaning in the real-world. Not all students self-motivate so then my goal is helping them get there. In order to do this, one-on-one discussion or forms of group/class discussion is very important for everyone to get to know each other. This can help to make connections to students' interests and find

ways for students to apply the knowledge to life. They want to know that what they are doing has a use, and giving them a chance to apply the knowledge gives them the chance to develop a deeper understanding and make those connections. When students have had that opportunity they are motivated to learn more and apply it.

Social Studies provides so many options for learning facts, concepts, themes, skills, cultures, etc. You can do anything with the social sciences, and all other content areas can be pulled into history and viewed through historical lenses. Traditionally it would seem that with history and the massive amount of facts that lecturing would be a good way to convey all of the information. I do not learn that way, and I know that every one learns differently. I do not want my students to merely memorize everything I tell them. I want them to think on their own and ask questions. I want to present the information, and I want them to decide what they want to do with it. There is so much they can do with it, and they have so many options for bringing in their creativity.

In my classroom there will be constant assessments. I think this is important because I want to know immediately if a student does not understand something. Everything in the classroom is constantly being built from the last lesson and corresponding assignments. If a student gets stranded at one point and there is no intervention that is where they will probably stay and so constant assessment is critical. Assessment can have a negative connotation because it is often linked to two choices: success or failure. My formative assessments are not for failure, they are for seeking success. I see it more as the students and I knowing exactly where we all are. These assessments are not for students to be worrying about their grades. Instead it will be for staying on track and moving forward.

One of the most important things to me is that the classroom climate is welcoming and safe for everyone. I think that is where the best learning and thinking occurs. I do not want students to be scared of asking questions, sharing, or working with new people. I would be really happy if the class created its own small family-like community. This would make it a class that they would be excited to get to. These relationships are important for more than just educational purposes. It would be ideal that the students



also feel emotionally safe. I want to do everything I can for my students, and in order to do this we all need to get to know each other. We need to be able to read each other's emotions and reactions to know if someone needs help even if they are not verbally asking for it.

The learning focus in my classroom will obviously be content, but I want students to get so much more from my classroom than that. The development of community skills such as interactions, work-ethic, respect, collaboration, and relationships will be a part of my classroom. The great thing about social studies is that current events provide great discussion topics. These events could be from around the world or they could be as local as being a part of the school community. This will all be woven throughout my teaching, but I plan on taking time when appropriate to discuss certain topics such as respect and bullying. Students should see what could happen and how to handle it to make sure things like bullying are not happening around them. These are skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.

Technology integration is something that I might struggle with at first. Type I technology is common, but it usually does not allow for much creativity. Teaching technology is like teaching another content area. There is so much to learn, and in order to have it in the classroom I need to understand it. With the open-ended concept for projects and thinking within social studies, students are going to be using unlimited applications and programs. There will be times when it will be easier because the entire class will be working on with the same program, but I expect that most of the time students will be using different programs to express their understandings. Technology will be a huge part of my classroom because it will provide so many options for expression. This goes along with MCL as well. Technology will become a huge part of my classroom whether or not I am comfortable with it so I would rather be comfortable than unknowledgeable.

I tend to take charge whenever I can. In my classroom I want the students to take charge. It's their classroom, and I want the lessons to be catered to who they are. I think there is still leadership in that for me. I like to lead because I want things to be perfect so I plan on leading students by asking questions to get them to think about what they want instead of me telling them what they should be doing and how

they should be thinking. In this way, being a facilitator creates just as much leadership as the structure that is so important to me.

Overall my philosophy is student and learner centered. There has been discussion that there is a difference between the two. Student-centered may be more about the student in general and making sure that they are absorbing the information that they are given. Learning-centered focuses more on the student as a person and how they learn. This means that the teacher must know who each student is as a learner. Along with my overall philosophy one thing that I think will make an impact in what I can offer a school is that I will be excited to be there. I am the type of person who gets enjoyment out of helping others. For this reason my philosophy may change from who I am to who I need to be to ensure my students are successful. It does not mean that I am changing who I am. Adapting and doing what I need to do is who I am.

As an educator I hope to help develop the environment of schools and their true purpose. Schools have been run in a business-like manner and have been very competitive. I am a competitive person, but competition between schools and test scores is not what is important. I would like to help bring to the forefront the most important purpose of schooling. Students are there to learn so that they can be successful in their futures. During that time they will be developing physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is the job of the educators and school staff to provide and create the environment that they can be most successful in. Educators, including myself, will help to facilitate the learning that is so important to their future successes. During my time in the field of education I plan on bringing awareness of how much the switch from competition back to the students is as well as create equal opportunities for everyone no matter how different they are.